

Top 10 signs you're a physicist

Fermilab celebrates Einstein with show on Webcast

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He didn't have Oprah on Thursday, but Leon Lederman had all the essentials of a good late night talk show: the band, the guests, the Top Ten.

One of the top signs you've won a Nobel Prize in physics?

"Mysterious but passionate letters appear in your mailbox," Lederman told an auditorium of physics enthusiasts. "Addressed to 'occupant.'æ"

Lederman, a Nobel Prize winner in physics himself and a former director of Fermilab, hosted "The Late Show with Leon Lederman" on Thursday at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, part of a Webcast to celebrate the World Year of Physics.

In 1905, Albert Einstein published five papers that changed the future of science and the world, Lederman told the audience of about 150.

Actually, Einstein told them himself.

"This is the 100th anniversary of that miracle year," said Chris White, an assistant professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology, wearing a white wig and playing master of ceremonies.

The whole show was part of a 12-hour "Beyond Einstein: World Wide Webcast" Thursday organized by CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research.

Issues ranged from Einstein's work to the work of physicists around the world.



MARY BETH NOLAN/DAILY HERALD
Scientist Peter Skands answers a question from Nobel Prize winner for physics Leon Lederman during a Webcast Thursday at Fermilab in Batavia.

The Fermilab segment was aired live between a videoconference with scientists from Pisa, Italy and Antarctica, and a segment on time travel from Tasmania.

Spotlights were focused on the Ramsey Auditorium stage as stagehands held up "Laughter" and "Applause" signs.

Organizers aren't sure how many people saw the Fermilab segment Thursday, but "there's the potential for thousands," said Fred Ullrich, manager of media services at Fermilab.

E-mailed questions answered live came from as close as New Jersey and from as far away as Cairo, Egypt.

Lederman's late show included Fermilab physicists as guests who chatted on a couch with coffee cups and brought video clips of their jobs.

Area high school students made up a good part of the audience, asking questions and taking pictures with Lederman afterward.

"The whole idea is to spoon it out in a way that's accessible," Ullrich said, noting the guests on the show were all young physicists. "These kids are sitting here seeing these young people talking about where we work—we could be building recruits right now."

Edgar Hernandez, a Science Club member at Hubbard High School in Chicago, said the club's trips to Fermilab will help him in his chosen field, medicine.

"We know the general things, but when we come here we learn more and more of the little things," he said.

Lederman enjoyed the time hosting his own show.

"I didn't make it as a standup comic," he quipped afterward, "so I had to go into physics."

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